

Mark 11:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the temple.

Analysis

And would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the temple (οὐκ ἤφιεν ἵνα τις διενέγκῃ σκεῦος διὰ τοῦ ἱεροῦ)—this detail, unique to Mark's Gospel, shows Jesus actively preventing the temple's desecration. The Greek *skeuos* (σκεῦος, "vessel") means any object, container, or merchandise. People were using the temple's outer courts as a shortcut for commercial traffic, turning sacred space into a common thoroughfare. The verb *ēphien* (ἤφιεν, "would not suffer/allow") indicates Jesus physically stopped people, exercising authoritative control over temple activities.

This action demonstrates Jesus' zeal for God's house (Psalm 69:9; John 2:17) and His authority over Israel's worship. By halting commercial traffic, Jesus momentarily restores the temple's sanctity, prefiguring the day when true worship will be "in spirit and truth" (John 4:23-24), not confined to Jerusalem's temple. Jesus' authority to cleanse and control temple operations implicitly claims messianic and even divine authority—this is Yahweh's house, and Jesus exercises lordship over it as God's Son.

Historical Context

The temple complex covered about 35 acres, with multiple courts: Court of the Gentiles (outermost), Court of Women, Court of Israel (Jewish men), Court of Priests, and the Holy Place/Holy of Holies. Commercial activities occurred in the Court of the Gentiles—the only area where non-Jews could worship. By filling this

space with money changers, animal sellers, and commercial traffic, the religious establishment effectively excluded Gentiles from approaching God. This violated the temple's purpose as "a house of prayer for all nations" (v. 17, quoting Isaiah 56:7). Jesus' action temporarily cleared the commercial chaos, restoring access for Gentile worshipers. The Talmud records that the High Priest's family controlled temple commerce and grew wealthy from corruption—these were "the bazaars of the sons of Annas," where prices were inflated and poor people exploited. Jesus' cleansing directly challenged the priestly aristocracy's economic interests, explaining their determination to kill Him (v. 18).

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. What does Jesus' prevention of commercial traffic through the temple reveal about the seriousness of treating sacred things casually or profaning holy space?
2. How did the religious establishment's commercial exploitation exclude Gentiles from worship and violate God's intention that His house be 'for all nations'?
3. In what ways might churches today risk commercializing or trivializing worship, and how can Jesus' zeal for His Father's house inform proper reverence?

Interlinear Text

καὶ	οὐκ	ἤφιεν	ἵνα	τις	διενέγκῃ	σκεῦος	διὰ	τοῦ
And	not	suffer	that	any man	should carry	any vessel	through	G3588
G2532	G3756	G863	G2443	G5100	G1308	G4632	G1223	
ἱεροῦ								
the temple								
G2411								

From KJV Study • kjevstudy.org